

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6637

INFO USLO PEKING

CINCPAC

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

S E C R E T BANGKOK 12593

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, OTRA, TH

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT'S COMMENTS ON HIS CHINA TRIP

1. THE AMBASSADOR OPENED HIS JUNE 27 DISCUSSION WITH PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT WITH THE OBSERVATIONS THAT, ON THE EVE OF KHUKRIT'S TRIP TO PAKING, HE WOULD MUCH APPRECIATE THE PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON THE SECURITY SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE ROLE CHINA MIGHT PLAY. KHUKRIT ROSE IMMEDIATELY TO THE BAIT, NOTING THAT THE SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOME MANEUVERABILITY BY THE COUNTRIES IN MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIA AND REASONS FOR PEKING TO WANT TO "MAKE FRIENDS" WITH THAILAND. HE SAID HANOI IS CONSIDERED TO BE VERY MUCH ON THE SOVIET SIDE. LAOS IS SOMEWHAT IN THE MIDDLE, AND CAMBODIA IS UP FOR GRABS. MAINLAND CHINA IS TRYING TO STRENGTHEN ITS HAND IN CAMBODIA AND MAY WELL BUY RICE IN THAILAND FOR SHIPMENT TO CAMBODIA.

2. REGARDING HIS FORTHCOMING TRIP, KHUKRIT SAID HE EXPECTED NO SERIOUS PROBLEMS IN PEKING. HE ORIGINALLY THOUGHT THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE, WHICH HAS BEEN NEGOTIATED AND WHICH WILL BE ISSUED

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DURING HIS VISIT, GAVE THAILAND LESS THAN THE PHILIPPINES AND

MALAYSIA HAD GOTTEN. HE IS NOW INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAILAND GOT MORE. PEKING ACKNOWLEDGES THE INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF THAILAND, AND THE COMMUNIQUE ALSO INCLUDES A LONG SECTION ON BROTHERHOOD AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

3. KHUKRIT SAID ALTHOUGH HE WILL SIGN THE COMMUNIQUE IN PEKING, HE HAD NO INTENTION OF OPENING EMBASSIES IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THIS, HE SAID, MAY TAKE CONSIDERABLE TIME. MEANWHILE THAILAND WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK OUT WAYS TO CONTINUE RELATIONS WITH TAIWAN IN THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL FIELDS. KHUKRIT SAID HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD MOST CERTAINLY PLAN TO CONTINUE TRADE, TOURISM AND COMMERCIAL AIR CONNECTIONS WITH TAIWAN.

4. IN A REALISTIC VEIN, KHUKRIT SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE PEKING WOULD STOP SUPPORTING THE THAI INSURGENCY MERELY BECAUSE THE TWO COUNTRIES AGREED TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS. HE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED, IN FACT, IF PEKING CONTINUED TO DO "NAUGHTY" THINGS, SUCH AS ITS SENDING OF FRATERNAL GREETINGS TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF MALAYSIA.

5. IN REPLY TO A QUESTION, KHUKRIT SAID HE BELIEVED THERE WOULD BE REVALRY FOR INFLUENCE IN THAILAND BETWEEN HANOI AND PEKING. THE DOMINO THEORY HAD BEEN PROVED IN INDOCHINA. PHNOM PENH FELL, THEN SAIGON AND NOW VIENTIANE IS IN REAL TROUBLE. HOWEVER, THAILAND WILL NOT NECESSARILY FOLLOW. WHILE IT IS NECESSARY TO MOVE WITH THE TIMES, THAILAND MUST BE FIRM AND MUST STOP THIS "CHAIN REACTION." THE OLD POLICIES WHICH PREVAILED BEFORE OCTOBER 1973 WILL NOT WORK ANY LONGER. THAILAND MUST BE TOUGH AND EVEN RUTHLESS IN ORDER TO SAFEGUARD ITS INDEPENDENCE.

6. KHUKRIT ADDED THAT THAILAND HAS NOT REALLY CHANGED AS FAR AS ITS FRIENDS ARE CONCERNED. CHINA IS A FACT OF LIFE AND THAILAND MUST DEAL WITH IT. HOWEVER, "WE DON'T HAVE TO GO TO BED WITH THEM." IN FACT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH PEKING WILL TEND TO DRAW THAILAND CLOSER TO ITS ASEAN FRIENDS. THEY WILL MEET MORE FREQUENTLY AND SPEAK MORE FRANKLY ABOUT THEIR COMMON CONCERNS REGARDING CHINA. WHEN THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THEY MIGHT USEFULLY DISCUSS HANOI AS WELL KHUKRIT SAID THEY WOULD MOST CERTAINLY DO SO.

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7. COMMENT: KHUKRIT HAS A REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF PEKING. WHILE HE WILL SMILE AND BE GRACIOUS, WE EXPECT HE WILL BE TOUGH WHEN NECESSARY TO PROTECT THAILAND'S IMPORTANT INTERESTS. IN CONTRAST WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI, ORIGINALLY SLATED TO MAKE THE TRIP ALONE, HE IS NOT ABOUT TO RUSH INTO THINGS BUT CAN BE EXPECTED TO APPROACH THAILAND'S NEW RELATIONSHIP IN A MEASURED WAY.

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